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#### COCHRAN VA MEDICAL CENTER UPDATE:

#### *Carnahan Speaks With Secretary Shinseki, Demands Scope Of Investigation Include Possible Whistleblowers*

(WASHINGTON, DC) - Congressman Russ Carnahan (MO-3) today announced that the House Committee overseeing veterans' issues has agreed to his request for a field hearing in St. Louis to investigate recent safety lapses at the John Cochran VA Medical Center that exposed over 1,800 veterans from Missouri, Illinois and other states to blood-borne pathogens.

In response to a request Carnahan made on Tuesday, Congressman Bob Filner (CA-51), Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Veterans' Affairs Committee, agreed that he will travel to St. Louis to hold a hearing to hear testimony and investigate the matter.

Earlier today, Carnahan also spoke by phone with VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, expressing his anger about how veterans were being treated and reiterating his demand that the VA immediately investigate this indefensible breach of standard operating procedures and report back what will be done to remedy the issue and ensure that it never occurs again.

Carnahan said that any investigation must include a thorough exploration regarding internal emails that indicate that a staff member at the Cochran dental clinic reported problems with the equipment sterilization process as long ago as August 2009. The staffer in question was terminated in November of 2009 - just over 2 months after raising concerns about the sterilization process.

"Why did it take the VA almost 6 months to address this problem?" Carnahan asked. "Why was this staffer ignored, and then fired just 2 months later? And why did it take almost 4 months to notify the veterans affected by their mistakes?"

Carnahan spoke by phone with several area veterans today who have received letters from the VA, indicating that they may be a risk of contracting hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. Several veterans have indicated that even as they have tried to set up appointments with the clinic for blood tests, they have been treated poorly and given little information.

"I am appalled at how our veterans are being treated, and I told Secretary Shinseki so," Carnahan said. "Some of these vets have serious health issues and combat-related injuries and stress disorders. This is not how they deserve to be treated."

Carnahan also held a conference call with members of his Veterans' Advisory Panel, comprised of vets from throughout the region, asking them to proactively reach out to veterans and family members in their communities to identify what assistance is needed and whether they have encountered problems getting information or appropriate care. Veterans and family members who may have further questions or concerns are urged to contact Congressman Russ Carnahan's office at 314-962-1523.

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